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# ROYAL COMMISSION

TO INQUIRE INTO THE EVENTS  
WHICH OCCURRED AT

## ARVIDA, P.Q.

IN

JULY, 1941

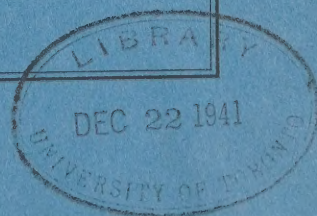
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### REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS

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OTTAWA  
EDMOND CLOUTIER  
PRINTER TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY  
1941







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# ROYAL COMMISSION TO INQUIRE INTO THE EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED AT ARVIDA, P.Q. IN JULY, 1941

## REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS

*To His Excellency the Governor General in Council,  
Ottawa.*

By a commission under the Great Seal of Canada, by authority of the Revised Statutes of Canada, Chapter 99, and in virtue of an Order in Council dated the 15th August, 1941, the undersigned were appointed to make inquiry concerning the causes and circumstances which led to a disturbance in the plant of the Aluminum Company of Canada, Limited, at Arvida, Quebec, and matters connected therewith, and to report their findings to the Governor General in Council.

Messrs. E. Stuart McDougall, K.C., of Montreal, and Fernand Choquette, C.R., of Quebec, were named by the Commissioners as Counsel for the Commission; and, at a later date, Mr. Joseph Dandurand, of Chicoutimi, was added. Mr. Adrien Falardeau, K.C., Deputy Clerk of the Court of King's Bench, Appeal Side, of Quebec, was appointed Secretary.

Having caused notices to be served upon the interested parties of the time and place, the inquiry opened at the Court House, Chicoutimi, at 10 a.m. on the 25th August, 1941, when the following appearances were entered:—

For the Attorney General of the Province of Quebec: Mr. Charles Cannon, K.C., and Mr. Jean Pelletier.

For the Aluminum Company of Canada: Mr. Aimé Geoffrion, K.C.

For the National Catholic Syndicate of the Aluminum Industry of Arvida: its President, Mr. Alexis Daris.

For the Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada: its Secretary, Mr. Gérard Picard.

At the opening of the commission, the Commissioners invited anyone else who might be interested to testify in respect to the facts under examination.

The inquiry lasted until the 9th day of September, seventy-six witnesses were examined and fifty-six exhibits filed. The evidence was taken by stenography; and a transcript thereof, together with the exhibits filed, is submitted herewith.

## PRELIMINARIES

A Collective Labour Agreement was entered into between the Aluminum Company of Canada (hereinafter referred to as "the Company") and the Syndicat National Catholique de l'Industrie de l'Aluminum d'Arvida, Incorporé (hereinafter referred to as "the Syndicate") on the 25th August, 1937 (Exhibit 39), and was duly approved by Order in Council. This Agreement, with certain amendments of the 28th July, 1939, is presently in force and effect. This Agreement provided for a payment to potmen at the rate of 49 cents per hour, but on the 15th October, 1940, the Company advanced



this rate to 51 cents per hour for such potmen as had been in the service of the Company for at least one year as such. In addition to this, the Company paid a bonus to the potmen, reference to which will be made hereafter.

On the 24th July a strike occurred shortly after 4 p.m. among the potmen employed by the Company, which strike later spread so as to include some of the other occupations, but the main feature of the situation relates to the potmen. These potmen worked in relays or shifts of eight hours per day. The shift due to work at 4 p.m. on the 24th July put on their usual working clothes in the rooms provided for that purpose, and repaired to their stations, but, almost immediately, and before starting to work, beginning with the men in the potroom farthest from the main entrance,—No. 48,—they proceeded to the gate at the main entrance, gathering with them potmen from the various lines as they went, and they arrived at the entrance in a noisy and tumultuous assembly, numbering about two hundred at first. They were clamouring for an increase in pay, the demand being in the first instance for an increase of ten cents per hour, but this claim changed subsequently to a cry for “one dollar an hour and no bonus.”

The potrooms consist of a number of lines running off a main corridor or passage, there being about 2,000 pots, each line having a hundred or more pots, cared for by three shifts during the twenty-four hours of work, and, according to the evidence of Mr. Labelle (p. 215), “a chief potman, two assistant chief potmen, an assistant having the care of the electrodes, two electrode changers, a crane operator, and nine potmen,” and there are also foremen, assistant foremen and superintendents. This area of potrooms is divided into four departments, namely, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.

When these potmen,—the men who had quit work,—arrived at the main gate about 4.15 p.m., another group gathered outside the main gate, some of whom were potmen belonging to another shift, or employees of other departments, as well as some persons attracted by curiosity. Certain officials of the Company, namely, Messrs. Carey and Weigle, who were later joined by Mr. Zenniger and Mr. Robert, endeavoured to address the assembly, and finally convinced its members that it would be better to appoint a committee of five or seven to meet the officials of the Company at the office; and this suggestion was given effect to. This committee of five met in the office of Mr. Johnston, the works manager of the Company, who was joined by Mr. LaBelle and Mr. LaMountain. It was at once pointed out to the committee that before any discussion could take place the workmen must return to their work. This decision was communicated to the crowd that had gathered, but did not prove acceptable, and the members of the committee returned to the office conveying this information, whereupon Mr. Johnston read to the committee a notice or poster that had recently been received from the Department of Labour at Ottawa, to the effect that any strike prior to a reference of the dispute to a board constituted under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act was an illegal strike. This appears to have had some effect on certain members of the committee, and one or two of them returned to work. Mr. J. A. Wilfrid LaBelle, in charge of the personnel department and security officer, observing the effect following the reading of this notice, returned to the assembly with the members of the committee and addressed the gathering, which had increased in number to about seven or eight hundred. After an appeal to their loyalty to the country and the Company, he read to the assembly that part of the notice in question reading as follows:—

**4. STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS:** Any strike or lockout is illegal unless a Board of Conciliation has been applied for and that Board has brought in its report.

“MINISTER OF LABOUR”.



This was about 5.30 p.m., and up to this time there does not appear to have been any warning given to the strikers of the danger threatening the pots. Mr. Carey, the superintendent, testified (p. 145) that the officials of the Company did not really anticipate a strike and did not believe that there was one chance in a hundred that a strike would occur. Mr. LaBelle appeared also to be under the same impression. This is further confirmed by the fact that the head potmen, foremen, assistant foremen and superintendents in the different pot lines, together with the assistance of a few potmen who remained loyal, endeavoured to carry on the process of making aluminum; but by 6.45 p.m. it became apparent that the work could not be continued.

The danger of the "freezing" of the pots having now become imminent, in order to prevent greater damage the electrical power used for heating the pots was cut off successively in the various potrooms, upon instructions from the officials of the Company, the last potroom being reached about 1 a.m. on the 25th July, the consequence being that the pots became cold and the aluminum therein congealed or became "frozen".

About 7.30 p.m. on the 24th July Mr. Johnston and Mr. Weigle proceeded to the rooms of the Syndicate, where they met the president, Mr. Daris, with whom they conferred, and who suggested to them the advisability of acceding temporarily to the demands made by the workers, subject to a written undertaking on the part of their representatives to submit the matter to arbitration within a fixed delay. This suggestion, however, was not accepted, and by 8 o'clock on the morning of the 25th July the strike was extended to other departments and included about 2,600 workmen employed by the Foundation Company of Canada, then engaged in making extensions to the plant of the Company; and, according to Captain Chalifour, Director of the Quebec Provincial Police, the strikers mounted in number to about 7,800. From that time on the workmen were in possession of the potrooms and the vicinity and had established a system of picketing. The police force of the Town of Arvida consisted of five men, including the Chief and a Sergeant, the Chief being employed by the Company in a similar capacity, dividing his time equally. The Company also had an armed guard, to the number of 33 (p. 208), whose duty consisted in guarding the property to prevent intruders from gaining access thereto. They worked in three shifts per day, were armed with 12-bore shotguns and were provided with two cartridges each. There was also a body called "special constables", to the number of 120 (p. 208), designed to prevent "sabotage" (Evidence of LaBelle, p. 238), but this body was entirely unorganized. The Company was apparently taken unaware by the development of this strike and indeed had made little provision for such contingency. Considerable improvement could be effected in the internal security organization in this respect. These "special constables" were merely such in name. They received no serious instructions and absolutely no training, and their very existence induced a false sense of security, which should not have prevailed. Mr. Johnston himself acknowledged their uselessness (p. 104). Chosen as they were, originally, as old and loyal employees, they could have been usefully occupied in keeping the Company officials in closer contact with the atmosphere prevailing, without the slightest disloyalty to their fellow-employees. The employment of private detective agencies, or industrial spies, or "undercover men", has been advised against strongly, but men of the type originally selected as special constables could well have been utilized as a liaison between the Company and the employees in order to keep the Company's officials advised as to the mounting dissatisfaction. The security officer had received from authorized and competent sources instruction and advice in this connection. Some of these suggestions he had adopted, but some only, and others he regarded as bordering on the fantastic (pp. 240 and 241).

Under these circumstances the Company had recourse to the Attorney-General of the Province of Quebec, and to the Quebec Provincial Police, and also



to the Departments of Labour both at Ottawa and Quebec. The Department at Ottawa sent one of the chiefs of the Department, Mr. M. S. Campbell, by airplane, and the Department at Quebec sent Mr. Cyprien Miron. About the same time Mr. Daris, President of the Syndicate, secured the services of Mr. Gérard Picard, the Secretary of the Federation of Catholic Workers of Canada. These gentlemen, who arrived on the 25th July, attended a meeting at the rooms of the Syndicate, at which there were present between 125 and 150 men. Mr. Campbell pointed out that the strike being an illegal one it was necessary that the workmen should return to their labour, in which case he undertook to prepare the necessary forms to secure a Board of Conciliation. Mr. Picard recommended the appointment of a committee of eleven to interview the officials of the Company, and this latter course was adopted. Mr. Campbell, however, persisted in his objection founded on the illegality of the strike, but suggested certain adjustments, since realized, whereby all potmen would be placed on a basis of 51 cents an hour, and also according the cost of living bonus. These suggestions, however, did not prove acceptable, though Mr. Picard realized the necessity of getting the men back to work in order to regularize their position. Mr. Campbell reached the conclusion that conciliation at that time was hopeless, and returned to Ottawa, where he communicated that view to the Minister (Exhibit 45, p. 4).

On the 26th July, at 10.49 p.m., Mr. Johnston telegraphed to the Attorney-General of the Province of Quebec, calling for the evacuation of the premises, and steps were at once instituted by the Attorney-General's Department to send troops to the scene, where they arrived on the morning of the 27th, being a Sunday, and the officer in charge conferred with Capt. Chalifour of the Quebec Provincial Police. About noon on that day Mr. Picard secured for himself, Mr. Albert A. Côté, and certain others, permission to enter the pot lines and to address the men gathered there. About three-quarters of an hour later the strikers who had remained in the interior of the plant came out, evacuating the plant itself, but a system of picketing continued to exist outside the gate. During the course of that afternoon the officials of the Company inspected the plant without any hindrance, ascertaining that, apart from the loss occasioned by the stoppage of production of aluminum, no physical damage had been sustained.

On Monday, the 28th July, the troops were stationed at various strategic points, and at 12 o'clock, at the request of the officer in charge of the troops the Riot Act was read by the Mayor of Arvida. On the same day, between 11 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. a vote was organized at the rooms of the Syndicate, the question submitted being as to whether or not the strike should be continued. 2,562 votes were recorded, of which 2,452 were in favour of the continuation of the strike, 51 against such a course, and 59 votes were declared void.

Following the reading of the Riot Act, the strikers appeared to have dispersed, and at 3 o'clock, Mr. Johnston testifies, Capt. Chalifour reported that the evacuation was complete and the situation clear. Steps were then taken to get the men back to work, and notices inviting such a course were posted at the instance of the Company.

On the following day, the 29th July, Mr. Daris informed the officials of the Company that the Syndicate had taken control of the matter and arranged for a meeting of the employees on the local golf grounds. Two or three addresses were delivered to the strikers at this meeting, notably that by Mr. Picard, and, a vote by show of hands being called for, return to work was almost unanimously approved. At 4 o'clock that afternoon all the workmen returned to the work that they had abandoned five days earlier.

From the beginning Mr. Daris advised the officials of the Company against having recourse to force, and this view was acquiesced in by the local officials notwithstanding suggestions apparently made by the head office at Montreal.

The foregoing is a brief review of the principal occurrences from the beginning to the ending of the strike. Upon the request of the Company the troops were withdrawn on the 31st July (Exhibit 49).



## CAUSES OF THE STRIKE

The causes leading up to the outbreak were of a cumulative character:

(1) Dissatisfaction, extending for some time back, with the rate of pay.

This rate of pay had been fixed by the Collective Labour Agreement, as already mentioned, but a partial increase was granted in October, 1940, to potmen of a year's standing. Owing to the rapid expansion of the plant, however, bringing frequent promotion, this increase affected only a small number of the men. The average rate of pay for potmen ranged from \$125.00 to \$130.00 per month, including the bonus, but of course subject to certain deductions (p. 236).

This dissatisfaction was not unknown to the Company. At an interview held on the 3rd July Mr. Daris told Mr. Johnston, the works manager, of its existence (p. 1058). Again, on the 19th July, Mr. Daris conveyed the same information to Mr. LaBelle (p. 1061). On the morning of the 24th he mentioned it to Mr. LaMountain, manager of the personnel division of the Company, and he told the latter that things were not going well (p. 1059). Mr. LaBelle had also been advised by one of his own staff, but attached little importance to it (pp. 217 and 218).

(2) Delay, imputed by the employees to the Company, in answering complaints.

It must be stated that many minor grievances were promptly attended to, but some of the demands had to be referred to the head office in Montreal. This was not the only plant of the Company, and certain matters required co-ordination, but the delay was apparently exasperating. Particular stress is laid upon the delay that occurred in replying to a letter from the Syndicate, dated the 24th May, which had not been answered before the strike (pp. 115 and 116). Reference was also made to letters of the 17th May (Exhibit No. 12) and the 20th and 21st May (p. 107), although in the latter case the extra man asked for had been accorded. Mr. Daris had complained on the subject to Mr. LaBelle (p. 219). A letter dated the 27th May (Exhibit 5) was acknowledged on the 30th of that month, but only replied to on the 3rd July (Exhibits Nos. 7 and 10). However justifiable in some cases the delay may have been, it undoubtedly proved a source of irritation.

(3) Decrease in the amount of the bonus declared in connection with the pay of the 23rd July, coupled with the fact that there had been, for some unexplained reason, a failure to announce the amount of the bonus prior to that date, as was usually the case (Evidence of Love, pp. 515 and 528).

(4) Sudden and unexpected incidence, on the 23rd July, of the first increase in the National Defence Tax, together with the imposition of a new tax for Unemployment Insurance, the net result being a marked decrease in the amount of pay that had been anticipated.

(5) Unusual climatic conditions prevailing throughout that week, the temperature gradually reaching a maximum of 94.5 on the 24th July, that is to say, the day of the strike.

(6) Other deductions from the pay-sheet, which, although agreed to by the employees, had an effect upon the amount of pay actually received. These other deductions included subscriptions to the pension and insurance fund that had been instituted by the Company, and also contributions to the Church, etc.

(7) Failure to make any reference to the cost of living bonus determined upon by the Government, and rumors of which had reached the men both through the newspapers and over the radio.

(8) Dissatisfaction with the "Bonus System":—Mr. Carey, in a report dated the 22nd July, 1941 (Exhibit 55), indicates clearly that this system is not a very happy one, being necessarily based upon a "group" system, with



resultant unsatisfactory variations between groups (Exhibit 42). The workmen were unable to check the allotment of this bonus and its computation and as a result displayed suspicion in respect to it. Apparently, however, there is a difficulty in finding a better system.

(9) Comparative inertia of the Joint Committee charged with the administration of the Collective Labour Agreement. This committee, apparently, had not met for a period of over a year.

The various conditions, enumerated above, combined to bring about a state of affairs where very slight additional impetus was apt to precipitate spontaneous though unorganized action. This additional impetus was received as a result of an incident that occurred on the 23rd day of July (being the pay day) at about 4 o'clock, in one of the potrooms, where, owing to absentees, it became necessary for a head potman (Witenen) to take one of the potmen from Lines 42 and 42A and place him in Lines 40 and 41, thus throwing additional labour upon the pot lines from which he had been removed, namely, the care of nine and ten pots, instead of seven and eight, the normal number in summer time. Three men, aged 23, 24 and 40, respectively, appear to have been particularly affected by this incident, the more so that some chaffing occurred during the supper hour, on the subject of their being obliged to do extra work without compensation, and as a consequence they formed a plan to demand an increase of wages to the extent of ten cents an hour. During the course of the evening they discussed this matter with others in the pot lines, and it appears to have been decided that such a demand would be launched at 4 o'clock on the following day at the main entrance. Accordingly, on the 24th, it was only necessary to remind their fellow-workers of this agreement, when the procession started, beginning at the lines farthest from the gates—No. 48—and gathering momentum as it proceeded. Unfortunately, during the course of the progress other voices were raised, with the result that on arrival at the main gate the demand was no longer one for increase of ten cents an hour but a demand for "a dollar an hour and no bonus". Up to this point there does not appear to have been any intention to cause a strike, but, the demands having changed, and there being no one having the active direction of this mob, the situation became entirely out of hand and work ceased. From then on there was undoubtedly an illegal strike, the origin of which has been related above. The three potmen referred to above apparently took no further influential part in the proceedings.

## LABOUR CONDITIONS

The work in the potrooms, while arduous, is not unduly so. While the potmen work for eight hours at a stretch, the manual effort is far from being continuous, only about 60 per cent of the time being occupied in physical effort, the remaining 40 per cent being spent in sitting waiting for a call to work as indicated by the automatic signals provided for that purpose, going to the passageway for water or access to the ventilating system. It has been established that the work is in no way detrimental to the health of the workers.

Undoubtedly, during the heat that prevailed at the time, the conditions were somewhat trying, for on the 23rd July—pay day—the thermometer reached 90 degrees and on the 24th 94.5. On the 24th Mr. LaBelle learned at lunchtime that an abnormal number of men were absent, and Mr. Daris observed a certain lack of energy in the men working under him, as indicated by the fact that they had only loaded six cars instead of ten as was the practice. He communicated this information to his superiors (pp. 1062, 1063 and 1064). The existence of the state of unrest had been communicated to the officials of the Company. On the 19th July, Mr. Daris told Mr. LaBelle, according



to the evidence of the latter (pp. 219 and 220), that the men were not satisfied, that there were too many taxes imposed at the same time, and also regretting that the Company did not reply more promptly to letters from the Syndicate, adding that unless they received an answer by Thursday, the 24th, they would hold a meeting of the Syndicate, at which the executive would recommend an application for a Board of Conciliation.

It was under the foregoing circumstances that the unfortunate incident referred to above took place, leading ultimately to an illegal strike.

### CONSEQUENCES IN FACT AND IN LAW

As a question of fact, it is remarkable that a strike of such extent should terminate without any person having been seriously molested or any damage done to the plant or machinery. Order was maintained by the exercise of good judgment on the part of those who took control, with the result that, notwithstanding some days of excitement, work was resumed in an orderly fashion within five days of the outbreak of the strike. Notwithstanding this, however, the illegal act on the part of the workmen resulted in a "freezing" of the pots, with the consequent suspension of production absolutely during the period of the five days of the strike, and as well for a period following thereon during which time the power was gradually restored and the pots successively brought into operation. It was at first thought that the "frozen" aluminum would have to be laboriously chipped out, but later it was found feasible merely to reheat it. The restarting of the pots began on the 29th July and was fully completed on the 17th August (Exhibit 23).

There is evidence in the record to the effect that 32,000,000 pounds of aluminum would normally have been produced during the period when the plant was placed out of operation as a result of this strike, the market value of which at the then prevailing price was approximately \$6,400,000, in respect of which, however, consideration must be given to the cost of production. There is a possibility that the linings of the pots may have been damaged, but no sufficient proof in this respect is forthcoming.

The evidence from every quarter indicates an entire absence of any subversive or hostile influence contributing in any way to the strike, and testimony to that effect and of the total absence of "sabotage", actual or intended, was forthcoming from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Quebec Provincial Police, the Municipal Police, the Department of Labour at Quebec, Mr. LaBelle the security officer, the senior officials of the Company, as well as various foremen, superintendents, etc. Similar testimony is also forthcoming from Mr. Daris and Mr. Picard, representing the Syndicate. Moreover, this testimony is strongly confirmed by the fact that the strikers were in complete possession of the premises for several days and absolutely no damage was done, though every opportunity presented itself. It seems clear beyond question that labour conditions alone were at stake (Evidence of Capt. Chalifour, pp. 349 and 351). Mr. Johnston himself testified as follows, at Page 81:

"There is no loss of material, there is the loss of what we could have produced."

and, at Page 104:

"... fortunately, we were altogether free from subversive activities."

As a matter of law, this strike, as such, was, for all those who took part in it, an illegal act. The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, R.S.C., 1927, Chapter 112, provides by Article 57 as follows:

"It shall be unlawful for any employer to declare or cause a lockout, or for any employee to go on strike, on account of any dispute prior to or

during a reference of such dispute to a Board under the provisions of this Act, or prior to or during a reference under the provisions concerning railway disputes in the Conciliation and Labour Act."

Article 60 reads as follows:

"Any employee who goes on strike contrary to the provisions of this Act shall be liable to a fine of not less than \$10, nor more than \$50, for each day or part of a day that such employee is on strike."

Article 61 reads:—

"Any person who incites, encourages or aids in any manner any employer to declare or continue a lockout, or any employee to go or continue on strike, contrary to the provisions of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not less than \$50 nor more than \$1,000."

Thus, collectively, the employees of the company violated the law and committed an illegal act, though the proof submitted to us does not enable us to indicate particular individuals with any degree of certainty. Again, the Defence of Canada Regulations (Consolidation) 1941, paragraph 27, provides as follows:—

"(1) No person shall do any act with intent to impair the efficiency or impede the working of any vessel, aircraft, vehicle, machinery, apparatus or other thing used or intended to be used for the purposes of any of His Majesty's forces, or for any undertaking engaged in the performance of essential services: Provided that a person shall not be guilty of an offence under this Regulation by reason only of his taking part in, or peacefully persuading any other person to take part in, a strike.

(2) The preceding provisions of this Regulation shall apply in relation to any omission on the part of a person to do anything which he is under a duty, either to the public or to any person, to do, as they apply in relation to the doing of any act by a person."

It will be observed that the intent forms an essential part of the foregoing definitions; and, as we have already pointed out, such intent being of a hostile or subversive character is entirely absent, though in a broader sense a meaning is sometimes attached to the word "sabotage" involving any injury, no matter how inflicted, adversely affecting any war object; and in the present instance there is no doubt that as a result of the illegal strike war aims were seriously prejudiced. One of the tragedies of the whole matter, to use the expression of Counsel during the argument, is that the Syndicate had convened a meeting of its members for the evening of the 24th July for the purpose of taking a vote on the question of the desirability or otherwise of applying for a Board of Conciliation, and, instead of that taking place, the strike occurred at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We are led to the conclusion that, in quitting work as they did at 4 o'clock, the potmen had only in view a demonstration in favour of an increase in salary without any intention of going on strike, and that when, later, a strike did actually occur, they failed to appreciate the illegality of their proceedings.

We have also considered, in respect to these strikers, the provisions of Articles 509 and 510 of the Criminal Code, relating to wilful damage to property, particularly the definition contained in the former Article, whereby it is provided that:—

"Everyone who causes any event by an act which he knew would probably cause it, being reckless whether such event happens or not, is deemed for the purposes of this part to have caused it wilfully."

These provisions could only apply to those who realized the probable consequences of their acts, and further it appears to us doubtful whether a mere



stoppage of production falls within the provisions of Art. 510, notwithstanding that the potmen by their positive act of desertion assumed responsibility in large measure for a diminution in the progress of war aims.

We have further considered the question as to whether those having the control and direction were guilty of any negligence or lack of foresight which might have averted the strike, namely, the Syndicate and the officials of the Company. As to the former, it would appear that it had been recognized that a demand for a Board of Conciliation was the only solution, and preparations had been made, prior to the 24th July, to hold a meeting for the purpose of demanding such a Board. No doubt the Syndicate was aware of the existing dissatisfaction, but, when the strike broke out, its officers lent their aid effectively to the re-establishment of order. It has been suggested that the Syndicate might have intervened at an earlier stage, but it must be kept in mind that the Syndicate was weak in numbers at that time, and its officers were reluctant to take any step which might possibly involve the Syndicate itself in the illegal strike. As to the Company itself, we have already referred to the insufficiency of provision against emergencies. The Company could not plead ignorance of the dissatisfaction that existed, and which was likely to be augmented by the reduced amount of pay coming to the employees on the 23rd July, the day preceding the strike. The security officer, Mr. LaBelle, was absent in Quebec during the critical period immediately preceding the strike, including the payment made on the 23rd July. Again, the increased pay accruing to the larger number of potmen, that was subsequently granted, might well have been announced earlier, as also the intention of the Company to accord the cost of living bonus, since the intention to grant this bonus had been confirmed prior to the strike. Further, the poster sent by the Department of Labour with the request that it be made public, and which had been received several days before the strike, might well have been published at an earlier date. The first effect that was given to this poster was the reading of it by Mr. LaBelle at half-past five on the afternoon of the 24th July, when the strike had become effective. It is also possible that the advice given by Mr. Daris, to make some concession, subject to the appointment of a Board of Conciliation, might well have been given further consideration, with a view to avoiding the enormous loss that ensued. These, however, cannot be regarded as positive conclusions, in view of what occurred; and, moreover, the necessity for communication between the local officials of the Company and those of the head office at Montreal made it difficult for the former, having restricted powers, to act immediately. There remains to be considered the responsibility of four individuals, the only ones who have been indicated with any degree of certainty as having assumed any form of leadership. We have referred to the three men who were responsible for the original demonstration which subsequently developed into the strike; but in our opinion they had no intention of anything further than a demonstration on the subject of increased pay, after which there would be a return to work. Unfortunately, through lack of organization and control, this demonstration took an unexpected turn for which they can scarcely be held responsible. A fourth individual—not a potman—was clearly implicated by the evidence of an officer of the Provincial Police to the effect that he urged the strikers to vote "Yes" in favour of the continuation of the strike, on the occasion of the vote on that subject. His denials in this respect were incomplete and unsatisfactory, and his explanations rather confused and difficult to follow.

On the other hand, it was established that from the outset he occupied himself in carrying out the instructions of the senior officers of the Syndicate, of which he himself was a member, as also the directions of the committee from the strikers. These senior officers of the Syndicate testified that one of the principal objects of the vote was to establish that the strike was not the action

of a small body of agitators, as the rumour then was, but rather a general movement by the labouring element in regard to pay and working conditions. This contention is supported by the fact that, notwithstanding this vote, and immediately after it, the officers of the Syndicate, with the active assistance of this individual, strove earnestly to get the strikers back to work, and in the end successfully.

Under the circumstances, too much importance should not be attached to his ill-advised words, and as to his motives there remains sufficient doubt as to entitle him to the benefit of it.

As a consequence of the foregoing, not being entirely convinced as to the guilt of these four individuals, we did not warn them, and as a further consequence we refrain from naming them in this report, seeing the provisions of Article 13 of the Act under which this inquiry is conducted.

### FALSE RUMOURS

The regrettable occurrences at Arvida attained considerable publicity, near and far, and rumours of a grave nature were current. The word "sabotage" was mentioned, and there were also suggestions of hostile and subversive influences inimical to the war efforts of Canada. While it is difficult to trace rumours to their source, it is obvious that such a serious interruption in war production really lent itself to the propagation of such rumours. Two factors, however, appear to have lent some colour to these rumours. The first one that may be mentioned is a report prepared by Mr. Carey, the superintendent, during the course of these events, dated the 29th July, but which he himself agrees was prepared on the 27th (p. 137). This report was intended for his superior officers only, but Mr. LaMountain thinks that its contents may have acquired some degree of publicity through its being communicated by telephone to Montreal (pp. 552 and 553). This report contained the following passage (Exhibit 26, Page 4):

"All the above things added together, plus the now very evident presence of agitators, seem to be the causes of this strike."

Recalled later, Mr. Carey agreed that this passage rested upon mere suspicions.

At Pages 169 and 170 of his evidence he said:

"Q. I gather that you cannot supply us with any justification that there was the presence of agitators; you know nothing of that?

A. No. I have no knowledge of any concrete organization, only the fact that the men appeared organized when they came to the door, apart from that there is nothing.

Q. On the additional questions put by Mr. Geoffrion, he referred to the paragraph in which you refer to the presence of agitators?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it that that was a mere suggestion that you had; you have nothing to base your statement on?

A. No, nothing but suspicion."

The second factor consists in the report made by Mr. Campbell to the Minister of Labour at Ottawa in regard to his visit to Arvida, in the course of which he stated that the strike was due to outside influences. This appears from a telegram from the Minister of Labour at Ottawa to the Attorney-General of the Province of Quebec (Exhibit 46), wherein the following passage occurs:

"The Confederation of Catholic Workers has an agreement with the Company, but its membership covers only about a thousand employees. The Confederation of Catholic Workers denied all responsibility for the strike and said it was due to some outside influence."



On this point Mr. Daris, the president of the Syndicate, explained the apparent error that had been committed. Questioned by one of the Commissioners he testified as follows: (In Translation):

"Q. I wished simply to point out to you, at the suggestion of our Counsel, that in this telegram which has been produced as coming from the Minister, the Hon. Mr. McLarty, attention is drawn to information, apparently coming from you or your Syndicate, to the effect that all this arose from the presence of agitators or foreign elements. Did you say anything along those lines?—A. That is just what I would like to correct immediately, because when I spoke to Mr. Campbell I told him that the Syndicate denied all responsibility in this matter and that it could only arise from an influence outside the Syndicate.

Q. When you spoke of 'outside' you meant to say 'outside the Syndicate'?—A. Yes, your honour.

*By Mr. Choquette, K.C.:*

Q. When you spoke of 'agents from outside', if the information came from you, you intended to speak of agents outside the Syndicate?—A. Yes.

Q. That it did not arise with the Syndicate?—A. No."

From this it would appear where this misapprehension arose, namely, opinions and erroneous rumours current at the outset.

## CONCLUSIONS

There was an illegal strike, following a demonstration by the potmen, having in view an increase in wages.

There was an absolute stoppage of work in the potrooms for a period of five days, followed by a further period lasting from ten to twelve additional days, during which period the pots were gradually brought back into operation.

During this period it would have been possible, under normal conditions, to have produced thirty-two million pounds of aluminum, and efforts on behalf of the war were diminished or delayed as a consequence.

No damage to plant or machinery occurred, except, possibly, injury to the lining of the pots, in respect of which the evidence is inconclusive.

There was no trace of latent or developed "sabotage", in the sense of hostile or subversive influence, apparent at any time. The strike was one relating to labour conditions and pay, and which might have been avoided possibly had there been better provision against such an emergency. The strike itself, however, is to be severely condemned by reason of its illegality and the grave damage which resulted from the serious diminution in the production of war material.

The rumours of sabotage, foreign agitators and subversive ideas, which appeared at an early stage, have not been justified, but, on the contrary, there is positive evidence negating such rumours, which appear to have resulted partly from a report of one of the officers of the Company, based upon suspicions later recognized to have been unfounded, and partly upon an ambiguous statement of the president of the Syndicate, which was reported to Ottawa in a sense not intended by its author.

Respectfully submitted.

SEVERIN LETOURNEAU,  
W. L. BOND,

*Commissioners.*

MONTREAL, 4th October, 1941.



















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